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FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4717
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHGH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY 0338
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0017
RHMFISS/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ3-E/CCJ5-E// PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE//J2/J5/HSE// PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0109
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0255
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 0497

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000045

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STATE FOR EUR/CARC, EUR/ACE, DRL
DOD FOR OSD (J. MACDOUGALL)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MASS](#) [KPAO](#) [AM](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#) [AF](#) [GR](#) [YI](#)

SUBJECT: ARMENIA BACKS OUR IRAQ POLICY, AND WILLING TO DO A
BIT MORE

REF: A. A) STATE 3592

[1](#)B. B) USDAO YEREVAN AM 011403Z DEC 06

[1](#)C. C) 06 YEREVAN 1683

Classified By: CDA A.F. Godfrey, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Armenia's Foreign and Defense Ministers each expressed solid support for our Iraq policy, and for the President's announced changes in Iraq strategy. Both agreed that our Iraq strategy cannot be allowed to fail, and reaffirmed Armenia's commitment to sustain its troop deployment there at least through the end of 2007. DefMin Sargsian also told us that Armenia is ready to provide military demining engineer training in Armenia to up to 15 Iraqi soldiers at a time. CDA also delivered a press conference January 11, drawing points from President Bush's speech and reftel. Local press coverage focused on Armenia's continued troop commitment, and our thanks to Armenia for its deployment. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) DRIVING HOME THE MESSAGE: CDA and Pol/Econ Chief called separately on Armenian Foreign Minister Oskanian and Defense Minister Sargsian January 12 to convey reftel points. CDA conveyed substance of reftel, thanked both ministers for Armenia's support for our Iraq policy, and left a non-paper drawn substantially from reftel points. Both ministers expressed firm support for our New Way Forward, and agreed that the U.S. and coalition partners must not fail in our Iraq strategy. The stakes for the region are too high.

[1](#)3. (C) FOREIGN MINISTER POLITICALLY SUPPORTIVE: Oskanian assured us that Armenia's commitment to our Iraq policy remains unchanged, reminding us that the Armenian parliament had just last month extended the GOAM's authority to deploy troops in Iraq for another year (Ref C). CDA mentioned that, during Defense Minister Sargsian's December visit to Iraq (Ref B), Sargsian had been pitched by Iraqi defense officials on the possibility of Armenian training (in Armenia) for Iraqi Border Guards, and that Sargsian had promised to consider it. Oskanian was unfamiliar with the proposal, but felt that training Iraqis in Armenia should be both practicable and cost-effective.

[1](#)4. (C) THE DEFENSE MINISTER READY TO OFFER IRAQIS TRAINING: Sargsian also reiterated Armenia's commitment to its Armenia deployment, at least through the end of 2007, as the

parliament had recently authorized. He thanked us for the Iraq strategy update, and reported that U.S. Iraq Commander GEN Casey had foreshadowed to him somewhat (during Sargsian's mid-November 2006 visit to Iraq), the need for certain changes in strategy along the lines the President has now announced. Specifically, the need to transfer increasing responsibility to Iraqis, while possibly boosting the number of U.S. forces to help establish security. Sargsian told us that his ministry was just about finished formulating a formal proposal on Iraqi troop training, based on the request put to him in Iraq by Iraqi Defense Minister Qadir (Ref B). Sargsian said his ministry was ready and able to offer demining engineering ("sapper") training to Iraqi soldiers in Armenia, 15 at a time. He said that Armenia had adequate facilities, instructors, trained dogs, and other resources necessary to do this. Details would shortly be forwarded to our DATT. Sargsian told us that he considered the Iraqi deployment a useful opportunity for his troops, because it enabled them to see "with their own eyes" the capabilities, tactics, and professionalism of U.S. and coalition troops in a combat zone.

15. (C) ...AND CONSIDER SENDING TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN: The CDA noted to DefMin Sargsian that our commitment to Afghanistan was a major theme he heard during his recent (EUR-IO COM conference) consultations in Washington. Sargsian indicated that he has given some thought to sending an Armenian contingent to Afghanistan, perhaps once Armenia's Kosovo deployment wound down. Armenia had formalized with Greece a new commitment to double its contingent in Kosovo (to two platoons), and was working with Greece to embed two or three officers with the Greek contingent in Afghanistan. These officers would provide the basis for decisions on possible future deployments to Afghanistan.

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16. (U) PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: The Charge conducted a television and radio interview in his office January 11 with reporters from Public TV, Kentron TV, and RFE/RL. The CDA first delivered remarks, cribbed substantially from the text of President Bush's speech, slightly modified to add local Armenian relevance. He then answered questions from the journalists, which focused especially on Armenia's contributions to Iraq and whether we were asking Armenia to expand its commitment. The CDA thanked the Armenian government and people for the contributions that Armenia has already made, and noted that more help would, of course, be welcome. Responding to a question, he also noted that an Armenian deployment to Afghanistan would be a welcome further step. Local media also picked up his comments about U.S. plans to continue "very significant assistance" to Armenia's peacekeeping battalion, which provides the Armenian troops now deployed in Iraq and Kosovo.

GODFREY